DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 111 732 SO 008 577

AUTHOR De Pauw, Linda Grant
TITLE Four Traditions: Women of New York During the American Revolution.
INSTITUTION New York State American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, Albany.; New York State Education Dept., Albany. Office of State History.
PUB DATE 74
NOTE 42p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.95 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS *Colonial History (United States); Cultural Background; *Cultural Traits; *Females; Feminism; Higher Education; National Defense; *Revolutionary War (United States); Secondary Education; Social Sciences; Sociocultural Patterns; United States History; Violence; War; Womens Studies; Working Women
IDENTIFIERS *Bicentennial; New York

ABSTRACT

The role of New York women in the American Revolution is discussed in a survey of four cultural traditions in 17th and 18th century New York--Iroquois, African, Dutch, and English. The purpose is to provide a historical record on the subject of women's history. Women from the four cultural traditions were bound by different conventions which influenced their reactions to the Revolutionary crisis and affected the ways in which that crisis would change their lives. American women were as deeply influenced by the Revolution as were American men, though not always to their benefit. The successful war for independence marked a significant turning point in the status of women. Documented stories are recounted of individual women's activities during the Revolution in each of the chapters titled: Four Traditions; Choosing Sides; Soldiers, Refugees, and Camp Followers; Treason and Espionage; and Aftermath. Some of the stories depict heroic acts, but some show wrongdoings as well. They all indicate the importance and necessity of the roles women played and the tasks they undertook during the Revolution. (Author/ND)

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NEW YORK STATE
AMERICAN REVOLUTION BICENTENNIAL COMMISSION

FOUR TRADITIONS:

WOMEN OF NEW YORK DURING THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Linda Grant De Pauw

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FOUR TRADITIONS

WOMEN OF NEW YORK DURING THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

by

LINDA GRANT DE PAUW

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New York State
American Revolution
Bicentennial Commission **Albany 1974**

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99 Washington Ave., Room 1807
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Second Printing 1975

Cover by Jenness Cortez

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FOREWORD

ONE OBJECTIVE OF THE NEW YORK STATE American Revolution Bicentennial Commission is to encourage research and writing in new areas of New York State history. In this booklet, Associate Professor of History at George Washington University, Linda Grant De Pauw, author of *The Eleventh Pillar: New York State and the Federal Constitution* and consulting historian for the Women's Coalition for the Third Century, introduces a little known topic: The role of New York women in the American Revolution. American women were as deeply influenced by the Revolution as were American men—and, as Professor De Pauw argues, not always to their benefit. Yet women have largely been ignored by historians of the Revolutionary period as well as by historians of early America generally, even though the successful war for independence marked a significant turning point in the status of women. This survey of four cultural traditions in 17th and 18th century New York—Iroquois, African, Dutch, and English—will hopefully fill part of the gap in the historical record and prompt other historians, professional and amateur alike, to delve more deeply into the subject of women's history.

John H. G. Pell
Chairman, New York State American
Revolution Bicentennial Commission.

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INTRODUCTION

AT THE TIME OF THE REVOLUTION half of the people in New York were female. All of them, Iroquois, Dutch, African, and English, lived in societies that placed definite restrictions on women. Nevertheless, in the last part of the eighteenth century, women in New York participated in the economic, political, and military—as well as the social, religious, and intellectual—life of their day more fully than members of their sex would again until well into the present century. So extensively did women participate in all aspects of American society that the most casual foray into the area of women's history in the Revolutionary era leaves one astonished at the amount of fascinating and highly significant material that has never found its way into general studies of the Revolution.

The reason that women do not appear as a matter of course in general historical works is that until the last few years women were not considered suitable subjects for professional historical research. Nor have those graduate students now being trained in the area of women's history begun to publish extensively. Consequently the broad foundation of scholarly monographs and biographies on which a general study—including a pamphlet such as this—ought to be based simply does not exist. This pamphlet does not pretend to summarize accepted scholarly opinion in the field, because there is no body of current scholarship. But the author hopes that readers of this pamphlet will agree that there certainly ought to be a body of historical literature on women, since the addition of the female half of the population to the story can expand our understanding of the Revolution in New York significantly. The author will welcome comments and corrections from readers and will be especially grateful to learn of unpublished research and projects now in progress.

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FOUR TRADITIONS

THE TRADITIONS that determined the acceptable limits of activity for women were not uniform in late eighteenth century New York. Iroquois, Dutch, Negro, and English women were bound by different conventions which influenced their reaction to the Revolutionary crisis and affected the ways in which that crisis would change their lives.

By 1775 the original Indian inhabitants of New York had retreated before a century and a half of European advances; but they were still numerous and powerful, dominating an area 1200 miles long and 600 miles wide. All the peoples of the Iroquois Six Nations practiced a rigid division of labor by sex. They employed no servants or slaves outside the members of their own families, and since their technology was primitive, Iroquois females worked extremely hard. The men provided fish and game; agriculture was an occupation delegated wholly to the women. Except for the initial clearing of the land, women did all the field work. They cultivated extensive fields of maize, kidney beans, and tobacco, while female children gathered wild fruits and berries which were dried for winter use.

Women were also responsible for preparing the food and maintaining the camp, a responsibility which included carrying on their backs all equipment and household utensils—as well as children too young to walk—whenever the tribe moved or went on a hunting expedition. In their spare time, Iroquois squaws plaited brightly colored baskets, fashioned wooden dishes, spoons, and shovels, and bowls and cradles of birch bark. They also sewed the Indian equivalent of shoes and stockings—leggings and moccasins decorated with intricate embroidery of wampum, dyed moose hair or porcupine quills.

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Although the Iroquois women worked hard at tasks considered beneath the dignity of warriors, they nevertheless enjoyed positions of respect and power in Iroquois society. While a wife had no status and was the servant of the family, the mothers of the tribes enjoyed exalted rank. Their opinions would be sought in tribal councils. Women's views would be presented by a male spokesman when warriors met; and if the warriors could not agree on an issue, it was automatically referred to the council of mothers. Iroquois matrons could and did determine policy on the gravest issues. They could even veto a declaration of war or decide whether a captive taken in war should be tortured and killed or adopted into the tribe.

The Iroquois custom of adoption reveals that they were a people remarkably free of racial prejudice. White and Indian captives, both children and adults, became in all ways equal to natural members of the Iroquois family when adopted. Runaway black slaves might also be adopted by Indian parents and could then marry into the tribe. A significant reflection on the Iroquois mode of life is the contentment of adoptees, especially women. Perhaps as many as 71 percent of adult white captives who were adopted preferred not to return to white society, and there is no doubt that captured children soon forgot their white parents and learned to love their Indian mothers. In 1765, after Pontiac's War, an exchange of captives was arranged at Albany. Some women travelled hundreds of miles to reclaim children who had been taken from them as much as a decade earlier. An eye-witness wrote: "Those who had adopted them . . . were very unwilling to part with them. In the first place because they were growing very fond of them; and again, because they thought the children would not be so happy in our manner of life, which appeared to them both constrained and effeminate. . . . It was affecting to see the deep and silent sorrow of the Indian women, and of the children, who knew no other mother, and clung foundly to their bosoms, from whence they were not torn without the most piercing shrieks; while their own fond mothers were distressed beyond measure. . . . I shall never forget the grotesque figures and wild looks of these young savages; nor the trembling haste with which their mothers arrayed them in the new clothes they had brought for them, as hoping that, with the Indian dress, they would throw off their habits and attachments."

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This exchange of captives was arranged by a prominent Dutch New Yorker, Margaretta Schuyler, whose influence with the natives continued a tradition among Hudson Valley women. From the period of the first contact between the Dutch and Iroquois, women seem to have had a special talent for learning the Indian languages and, possibly because of the habitual Indian respect for mothers, for gaining the confidence of Indians. When Governor Petrus Stuyvesant made his original treaty with the Six Nations in the mid-seventeenth century, he used a woman as his interpreter; and soon a number of Dutch women were travelling in the Indian country as traders and land agents. Their success in these dealings piqued the French who competed with the Dutch for the Indian trade. A Frenchman described one of these female Dutch traders in 1679: "This woman, although not of openly godless life, is more wise than decent. . . . She is a truly worldly woman, proud and conceited, and sharp in trading with *wild* people as well as *tame* ones. . . . She has a husband who is her second one. He remains at home quietly while she travels over the country to carry on the trading. In fine, she is one of the Dutch female-traders who understand the business so well."

Trading in the Indian country was only one example of the business activities of Dutch women. The economic enterprise of Hollanders' wives was considered remarkable by other Europeans. Since the Dutch conception of social order was grounded not upon individual efforts but upon the joint endeavors of family members, each member of the family was expected to work to increase the family fortune. No matter how capable and active her husband might be, a Dutch wife felt obliged to exploit any available opportunity to make money on her own. Far from feeling threatened or offended by such vigorous feminine activity, Dutch men were proud of their wives' business acumen. In 1721, for instance, a Dutch New Yorker wrote his brother. "Two nights agoe at eleven o'clock, my wife was Brought to bed of a Daughter and is in as good health as can be Expected, and does more than can be Expected of any woman, for till within a few hours of her being brought to bed She was in her Shop, and ever Since has given the price of Goods to her prentice, who comes to her and asks it when Customers come in. The very next day after She was brought to bed she Sold goods to above thirty pounds value. And here

the business matters of her Shop which is Generally Esteemed the best in New York, she with a prentice of about 16 years of age perfectly well manages without the Least help from me, you may guess a little of her success."

Of course a Dutch woman's business activities could not be conducted until the essential "women's work" was done. Dutch women traditionally married early—sometimes as young as fifteen—and bore many children. Their responsibility for feeding the family included tending the kitchen garden, cooking, and preserving. The men cared for "the hardy plants" (corn, cabbage, and potatoes) in the fields, and men plowed the women's gardens in the spring. But after that "no foot of man intruded" as the women—those of "the better sort" as well as wives of common people—planted, cultivated, and harvested their crops of kidney beans, asparagus, celery, cucumbers, and herbs. To clothe their families, the women practiced spinning, weaving, sewing, and constant knitting. Dutch women were also proud of their ornamental needlework. Albany girls even took their work baskets when they went picnicking. When a family on the upper Hudson made a log raft to float with their wood down to the Albany market, the mother was likely to take her spinning wheel and spin during the trip. Finally, Dutch wives were known to keep their homes exceptionally clean.

Perhaps the Dutch would have been forced to sacrifice cleanliness if they had not had household slaves. In the middle of the eighteenth century, there were more slaves in New York than in any colony north of Maryland. Slaves represented fully 15 percent of the population. As late as 1771, after a sharp increase in the white population, slaves still represented almost 12 percent of the total population. New York slaves, however, did not work in gangs in the fields. Few families owned more than one or two blacks, and these were usually personal servants who worked together with their masters or mistresses under circumstances that encouraged the growth of warm personal relationships. Slave and mistress would be brought together as toddlers, share the games and adventures of childhood, share housekeeping duties and, when the young mistress married, the young woman slave became part of the newlywed's dowery.

Iroquois society knew nothing of slavery nor of servitude outside the family, so they consequently regarded slaves "with contempt and dislike . . . and would have no communication with them." The New York Indians despised those who would not choose death over slavery. But in the white societies of the eighteenth century, many people besides slaves served outside the family – indentured servants, apprentices, and the poor who did domestic work for strangers for pay. And in comparison with most servile institutions, the Dutch system of slavery seemed remarkable for its mildness. The insolence of New York Negroes – especially of those in New York City – was notorious throughout America. "It is astonishing, when I recollect it," wrote a Scotswoman who had lived in Albany, "what liberty of speech was allowed to those active and prudent [slave] mothers. They would chide, reprove and expostulate in a manner that we would not endure from our hired servants."

Unfortunately for the blacks in New York, the Dutch influence was giving way to the English at the time of the Revolution; and the English suffered from racial prejudices that made English slavery more burdensome than Dutch. The Dutch had no slave code before the English came. They thought of the black servants primarily as humans rather than property, as their attitude toward free blacks proved. The Dutch accepted free blacks in the militia and permitted interracial marriage. Free blacks could own land, slaves, and even white indentured servants. But the English found Dutch tolerance abhorrent. By the time of the Revolution it had become illegal for blacks to own land or to be legally married in church, and the law did not recognize the possibility of a slave woman being raped.

Before the Revolution, black women in New York dealt with the institution of slavery by manipulating the system to gain the greatest possible benefits. Open rebellion would have been even more futile for a slave woman than for a man; and running away, especially if one had children, was almost impossible. A woman could not easily go to sea or escape to Indian country. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that black women comprised well under 20 percent of runaways in New York. Besides, New York mistresses were generally kind and considerate to their slaves. White mistresses would take care of their slaves' children, placing them as servants with good

people in nearby homes if their mother trained them well. A faithful servant could expect to be provided for in her old age. No sensible woman would risk losing such security—unless a very attractive alternative presented itself.

In the Hudson River valley, women of Iroquois, Dutch, and African background lived close together in the mid-eighteenth century and shared their traditions and feminine skills. Some Mohawk women began to spend the summers encamped at Albany, selling their handiwork to the white women and talking with them about everything from embroidery to religion. The Indians would not speak to slaves, but the Dutch women conversed with their servants (many of whom reached adulthood in Africa before being enslaved) and heard of strange customs, manners and governments, some of which, such as matriarchal tribal systems, were more like those of the Iroquois than those of the Dutch. Through Dutch intermediaries, black women also learned of Indian ways, used the baskets and brooms their mistresses bought from the Indians, and discovered the convenience of backpacking babies.

This accommodation among women of three cultures did not extend to the English. English racial prejudices were too strong. The English felt an antipathy for Indians and blacks and did not find the Dutch much more appealing. As late as 1787 an English American wrote: "Sooner than marry any woman on earth that has Dutch blood in her veins, either for Love or Money or both united, I would ravish my grand Mother, live a Beggar, & die of famine in a ditch." On the other side, the Dutch were repelled by the English settlers who moved into New York by way of New England. They considered the English "conceited, Litigious, and selfish beyond measure, . . . very vulgar, insolent and truly disagreeable people." The numbers of English settlers steadily increased, however, inevitably altering the Dutch character of New York. By the time of the Revolution, New York City was English, not Dutch. Even in Albany, the area of heaviest Dutch concentration, women found it necessary, if unpleasant, to learn to read and write the English language. "I hope wen You right to me again," sixteen-year-old Anna Gansevoort wrote to her brother in 1769, "you will right as I do haf dutch and haf Engleis. I don't no the meaning of haf the words." But then Dutch

women had never exerted themselves unduly to acquire a literary education.

In this respect, Dutch and English practices were similar. English and Dutch women in New York learned enough reading, writing, and arithmetic to get by, but female education was generally more practical. Like the Dutch, English girls were taught to do the things their mothers did—cook, care for babies, nurse the sick, tend the kitchen garden, and, when those tasks were done, spin, weave, sew, and knit or help out in the family business. Among the English, however, married women were limited to "helping out;" they could not legally engage in business enterprises in their own right as could Dutch women. Indeed, the English common law recognized no personal or property rights of any sort for married women. They were considered "one flesh" with their husbands, and the head of that flesh was his.

Dutch women, on the other hand, were equal to their husbands before the law. A Dutch marriage contract usually secured a woman's property rights. But even without a contract, Dutch law presumed a community of possessions. Furthermore, the Dutch rejected the English practice of primogeniture (by which all of the family property descended to the eldest son) and instead divided the fortune equally among all the children. When a young Dutch woman married, she received part of her share of the estate as a marriage portion and the rest as a legacy. Since a Dutch woman retained control of her property, she could use it in her own business; or if she invested it with her husband, she would have a proportionate influence on all major management decisions. If she invested more than her husband, she could exercise control. English wives, however, always held subordinate positions. Even if their husbands allowed them to work independently—as laundresses or shopkeepers or schoolteachers—their wages went to their husbands, and all business and legal transactions were performed in his name.

Usually the English wife was nothing more than an unpaid assistant in her husband's business. In the pre-industrial age, most business and industry centered in the home or in a shop or workshop downstairs or out back. It was consequently natural for a shopkeeper's wife to wait on customers, for a

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printer's wife to learn to set type, or for a tavernkeeper's wife to keep the accounts and order supplies. Indeed, despite the legal limitations on Englishwomen's economic activity, they performed a wide variety of tasks in almost every occupation. Perhaps the most bizarre was one Mrs. Dugee whose husband promoted her appearance in New York City as "the Female Samson." "I. She lies with her body extended between two chairs and bears an anvil of 300 lb on her breast, and will suffer two men to strike it with sledge hammers. II. She will bear six men to stand on her breast lying in the same position. III. She will lift the above anvil by the hair of her head. IV. She will suffer a stone of 700 lb. to lye on her breast and throw it off six feet from her." Mr. Dugee did his part by dancing "the stiff-rope with iron fetters on his feet."

One hopes that Mrs. Dugee was able to retire when Mr. Dugee died, but usually a widow found it necessary to carry on the family business. Fortunately there was an allowance in the English common law to make this possible. A widow (or a spinster) could be designated "feme sole" and was then allowed to carry on business enterprises on her own, much as Dutch women could. If a widow did not remarry, she might become owner and proprietor of any sort of business; and a number of women entrepreneurs appear on the lists of New York City freemen. But spinsters were very rare and widows usually remarried within months of their husband's death.

English women, then, like Dutch and Iroquois women, were deeply involved in the productive activities of their communities. And despite the apparent legal restrictions on female activity, women other than slaves had a measure of influence that would make itself strongly felt as the Revolutionary crisis developed in the years before 1776.

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CHOOSING SIDES

"PARDON ME MY LOVE FOR TALKING politics to you," Alexander Hamilton wrote his fiancee Elizabeth Schuyler in 1780. "What have we to do with anything but love?" Hamilton was reflecting a new-fangled English notion that women—at any rate *ladies*—did not concern themselves with political activity. But New York women had taken part in politics since the seventeenth century; they would not learn to be ladies until after the Revolution.

In the early days of settlement, political influence among both the English and the Dutch was determined by wealth and social status. Superior people—whether male or female—had it; inferior people—whether male or female—did not. When Lady Deborah Dunch Moody established a town at Gravesend, Long Island, in 1646, she enjoyed most of the rights suitable to an English noble. Common law limitations did not bind nobility. Whether married or not, noblewomen could be knights of the kingdom, vote for members of Parliament, preside over courts, and, of course, carry on any kind of business activity in their own names. So Lady Moody governed her estate; and when the Governor of New Amsterdam wanted an election held, he wrote to her. She not only voted but counted the ballots as well. Later in the seventeenth century Margaretta Van Schlectenhorst, widow of Philip P. Schuyler, felt it her business to support her Albany neighbors in their resistance to the rebel leader, Jacob Leisler, supplying funds needed to pay soldiers.

In Europe only the few people with substantial fortunes enjoyed political rights. But in America, where property ownership was widespread, political rights came to be enjoyed by the middle class as well. Women in New York City were technically eligible to serve on the watch and, because of their status as burghers or freemen, to vote in municipal elections.

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In practice, however, the property-holding women seem to have had the burdens but not the benefits of full citizenship. In 1733 some of these disfranchised women published a protest in the New York Journal: "We, the widows of this city, have had a Meeting, and as our case is something Deplorable, we beg you will give it Place in Your Weekly *Journal*, that we may be relieved, it is as follows: We are House Keepers, Pay our Taxes, carry on Trade and most of us are she Merchants, and as we in some measure contribute to the Support of Government, we ought to be entitled to some of the Sweets of it; but we find ourselves entirely neglected, while the Husbands that live in our Neighborhood are daily invited to Dine at [the English governor's] Court; we have the vanity to think we can be full as Entertaining, and make as brave a Defence in Case of an Invasion and perhaps not turn Taile so soon as some of them."

This petition drew no response and New York women were rarely able to exert political pressure through established political institutions, and never in significant numbers. But, as in business, women did manage to exert some influence in politics. Women attended the weekly "assemblies" of the principal families that were often, in fact, political meetings, and the opinions of a prominent woman such as Margaretta Schuyler frequently would be sought out. New York women also proved that they shared the ability of men to organize protest mobs, a typical form of political expression in an age when the franchise was restricted. For instance, Magdalena Zeh led her female neighbors against Sheriff Adams in 1715 when he challenged their squatters' rights along the Schoharie River. Armed with brooms, rakes, and hoes, they dragged the unfortunate man through barnyards, rode him on a rail, and finally dumped him on a bridge on the road back to Albany.

Such instances provided valuable training for the brewing imperial conflict. In 1765, with the passage of the Stamp Act, New York and the other American colonies began a decade of almost uninterrupted political debate. New York women played a role in the ensuing controversy. "Politics, politics, politics!" complained a visitor to New York City in May, 1775. "Men, women, children, all ranks and professions mad with Politics." Not all New Yorkers favored the new spirit of protest and resistance—indeed fully half of them did not. But

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from the beginning women appear among those who enthusiastically embraced the patriot cause.

A particularly feminine way of opposing the Stamp Act was to protest the custom of marrying with a license which had to be purchased from the governor and which now required a stamp. Although the New England custom of posting banns in a church was considered inelegant by New Yorkers, patriotic women thought that the New England practice might provide a means for circumventing the controversial British ordinance—and for saving money as well. "As no Licenses for Marriage could be obtained since the first of November for Want of Stamped Paper," reported the *New York Gazette* on December 6, 1765, "we can assure the Publick several Genteel Couple[s] were publish'd in the different Churches of this City last Week; and we hear that the young Ladies of this Place are determined to Join Hands with none but such as will to the utmost endeavour to abolish the Custom of marrying with License . . ."

Women also felt that they could participate in symbolic demonstrations such as those which delighted the Sons of Liberty. Alexander McDougall, who had been jailed for publishing a pamphlet against the Quartering Act, was visited on the forty-fifth day of the year by forty-five gentlemen who dined with him on forty-five pounds of beefsteak cut from a bullock forty-five months old, in order to dramatize the similarity of the American merchant to the Englishman John Wilkes who had been condemned for his publication, *North Briton #45*. Later, forty-five virgins appeared at McDougall's prison cell and sang him forty-five songs. A tory observer sourly suggested that they were all forty-five years old.

Early in the period of colonial protest, the colonists determined that the best way to force Britain to respect the rights of Americans was to boycott British goods, especially those, like tea, that bore an import tax. This strategy made it necessary for American women to practice frugality and to increase domestic manufacture of such essential items as cloth. The *New York Gazette* published some advice for "daughters of liberty," clipped from a Boston paper six days after the implementation of the Townshend duties:

> First, then, throw aside your topknots of pride,
> Wear none but your own country linen,

Of Economy boast, let your pride be the most,
To show clothes of your own make and spinning.

What if home-spun, they say, is not quite so gay
As brocades, yet be not in a passion,
For when once it is known, this is much worn in town,
One and all will cry out—'Tis the fashion.'

Throw aside your Bohea and your Green Hyson tea,
And all things with a new-fashion duty;
Procure a good store of the choice Labrador [a tea substitute]
For there'll soon be enough here to suit ye;

These do without fear, and to all you'll appear
Fair, charming, true, lovely, and clever,
Tho' the times remain darkish, young men may be sparkish,
And love you much stronger than ever.

New York women followed the example of women in New England as they forswore tea and worked to set new records in spinning linen. Spinning, like knitting, quilting, and other hand work, was customarily carried out in the company of friends and neighbors. While the women worked, they almost certainly talked politics. Certainly they viewed the work itself as a kind of political activity. A 1769 newspaper reports: "Three young Ladies at Huntington on Long Island, namely Ermina, Leticia and Sabrina, having met together, agreed to try their Dexterity at the Spinning-wheel; accordingly the next morning they sit themselves down, and like the Virtuous Woman, put their Hands to the Spindle and held the Distaff; at Evening they had 26 Skeins of good Linen Yarn each Skin [sic] containing 4 ounces, all which were the effects of that Day's Work only. N.B. It is hoped that the Ladies of Connecticut and Rhode Island, who have shown their skill and Industry at the spinning wheel will be sincerely pleased to find their laudable example so well imitated in Huntington, and that it has kindled a spirit of generous Emulation in the Ladies of New York Government; we hope the same Spirit will spread thro' the Continent. That the Ladies while they vie with each other in Skill and Industry in this profitable Employment, may vie with the men, in contributing to the Preservation and Prosperity of their Country, and equally share the Honour of it."

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That the women took their sewing circles seriously is further illustrated by the fate of a young man who was foolish enough to interrupt one in Kinderhook, New York, in order to deliver his uncomplimentary views of the Continental Congress. The women, "exasperated at his impudence, laid hold of him, stripped him naked to the waist, and instead of tar covered him with Molasses, and for feathers, took the downy tops of flags [flax], which grow in the meadows, and coated him well, and then let him go."

The increased production of clothing that began in support of the non-importation movement became even more vital to the patriot cause once war broke out in 1775. Providing shirts and stockings for the American forces was traditionally "women's work." Even though the New York Committee of Safety urged everyone to grow more flax and to stop eating lamb so that more wool could be produced, the conversion of fiber into cloth was the responsibility of women. The spinning wheels, looms and knitting needles were operated almost exclusively by women. Never the sort to sit with idle hands, women became even more industrious during the war years. Plain people knitted, officers' wives knitted, and even loyalist girls given refuge in patriot territory spun flax for soldiers' shirts. As the war progressed, the New York legislature passed an "Act to Procure Shoes and Stockings for the New York Troops" which empowered assessors to stipulate a quota of stockings to be provided by each woman and to levy fines of ten dollars for every pair not provided.

Supplying clothing for the army was almost exclusively a feminine responsibility, although a few men were freed from military service to weave and to make shoes. Women also helped secure two other essentials: gunpowder and shot. In March of 1776, the New York Committee of Safety appointed a committee in each county to encourage the production of saltpeter, a responsibility which women shared with men. Three thousand leaflets describing the methods of making saltpeter and gunpowder were distributed, and the local committees reported good response. Women also held scrap drives. Pewter dishes, door knockers, fishnet weights, window weights, even the equestrian statue of George III that had once stood on Bowling Green in New York City, ended up in melting pots to

be turned into shot and cannon balls. And finally, as the war progressed, women supplied horses and provisions and provided for the other needs of officers and men as they passed through their neighborhoods. Women took in return the paper money and certificates of dubious value issued by the fledgling American government.

Meanwhile, loyalist women in New York were probably as numerous as patriots, if less active. The patriots denounced as Tories all who were not fervent Whigs, although many New Yorkers were merely indifferent. The Dutch tradition did not comprehend the "Cromwellian politics" of rebellion that inflamed New England Yankees. While many Dutch New Yorkers of both sexes embraced the patriot cause, many others were deliberately apolitical. So while loyalist women may have been as numerous as patriots, they were less visible. The single organized activity of loyalist women in New York appears to have been the raising of money in New York City to purchase and outfit a privateer called *The Fair American*.

Perhaps the most valuable support for the British in New York came from the Iroquois. For almost a century, the Six Nations had been a crucial weight in the balance of power between French and English in North America. Now, in the struggle between Americans and English, the Iroquois could bring significant aid to either side. Even though in 1775 the general council of the Iroquois League decided to remain neutral, each of the Six Nations was left free to choose sides. As the British and the Americans wooed the tribes, women exerted their customary influence. Particularly significant was the activity of Mary Brant, the Mohawk widow of Sir William Johnson. Her personal power in the governmental structure as head of a society of Six Nation matrons was reinforced by the prestige of her late husband. It was said that in the councils of the Iroquois "one word from her goes farther with them than a thousand from any white Man without Exception." It probably even went farther than that of most Indian men. There is reason to believe that Mary Brant exerted more influence in the Confederacy than her better known younger brother, Joseph. She was equally loyal to England, and she worked to keep the western tribes of the Six Nations solidly allied with the British.

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In the end, the Cayugas, Senecas, Onondagas, and most of the Tuscaroras stood with the Mohawks in support of King George III; only the Oneidas and some of the Tuscaroras aided the colonists. The Indians who favored the patriot cause were influenced by the Reverend Samuel Kirkland, a New England missionary, and his wife, Jerusha Bingham Kirkland, who was considered "mother" of the Oneida nation and who was a leader among the women of the tribe.

The Revolution opened some important possibilities for the black women of New York. As whites became sensitive to their own political "slavery," they became increasingly sensitive to the more concrete slavery of blacks. It seems probable that New York blacks relied on Revolutionary rhetoric to win handsome concessions from their owners. Black men could win their freedom by serving in the patriot army, and manumissions of both male and female slaves increased significantly after the war began. But the desire for personal freedom that motivated black interest in the Revolution did not necessarily dictate an attachment to the patriot cause. Not only were black women among those who followed the British troops as servants to officers and their families, but the first promise of freedom came from the royal governor of Virginia, Lord Dunmore, who guaranteed emancipation to any able-bodied slave who joined the British army. Although this promise was extended only to men, a few black women are known to have fled to the British, hoping to be freed. In New York City one black mother was so inspired by the promise of freedom held out by Dunmore that she reportedly named her child in his honor.

As the war began, then, white, red, and black women, chose sides. They continued to make their presence felt as the conflict grew.

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SOLDIERS, REFUGEES, AND CAMP FOLLOWERS

DESPITE HER SPRAWLING TERRITORY, New York ranked no higher than seventh in population when the Revolution began. Yet nearly one-third of the military action of the Revolutionary War took place in New York. Throughout the war, the patriot population was vulnerable to land and water attacks by British, loyalists, and Indians.

Even before the British fleet arrived in New York harbor, loyalists were strong in Queens, Richmond, Westchester, Kings, and Manhattan. Washington could not hope to prevent the occupation of the vital port of New York City, and the Continental Army was fortunate to escape destruction. After the Battle of Long Island in August, 1776, the American generals met in the home of Christina Ten Broeck Livingston (whose husband had belatedly gone to Philadelphia to sign the Declaration of Independence) and laid plans to evacuate the army to Manhattan. It was a well conceived operation, but it was almost upset by a loyalist woman named Mrs. Rapalye who lived near the embarkation site on Brooklyn Heights. When she was awakened in the middle of the night by the noise of 10,000 men boarding rowboats under her windows, she sent her black slave boy to the British with a warning. But the boy ran into a company of Hessians who spoke no English, and they responded to his babbling by locking him in the guardhouse. By the time he was released the next morning, the American army with all of its horses and artillery was in Manhattan.

Less than three months later, however, Manhattan also had to be abandoned after the disastrous defeat of the American garrison at Fort Washington on November 16, 1776. Among those killed that day was a Virginia man named John Corbin in the 1st Company of Pennsylvania Artillery. When he fell,

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his twenty-five year old wife, Margaret Corbin, took over his position at a small cannon. It was a vulnerable position, and she too was soon wounded. One of her arms was almost severed and a breast was badly lacerated by grapeshot. She was moved to Philadelphia with other casualties and assigned to the Invalid Corps. Recognizing that her wounds would leave her permanently crippled, Congress acknowledged her gallantry by awarding her a pension of half-pay and "one compleat suit of cloaths" annually for the rest of her life. She settled in Westchester County, New York, where she died about 1800.

We know more about Margaret Corbin than we do about most of the women who accompanied the American army. But there were undoubtedly many like her in every campaign of the war. They would take up a rifle or serve at a field piece only in an emergency, but meanwhile there were parts of army life that were considered "women's work." Nursing, cooking, mending uniforms, washing, and foraging were tasks that all eighteenth century armies assigned to women. It was customary to provide half-rations for a certain number of women and quarter-rations for the children who necessarily marched with their mothers. Some women of the Revolutionary era clearly preferred following the army to staying at home. Such officers' wives as Mrs. Henry Knox and Mrs. Nathanael Greene surely did, and Martha Washington boasted that she heard the first and last shot of every campaign during the war. It seems probable that, as long as the weather was good and the guns were silent, the children also enjoyed themselves. A six-year-old girl who followed the British troops in New York during the French and Indian War later remembered how fine it had been to see her father every day. She had been able to run outdoors, freed from the tedious needlework that she could not be compelled to do while marching through the woods.

Many New York women, however, followed the troops out of necessity rather than choice. When New York City was occupied by the British, large numbers of patriots fled. Elizabeth Ainsley Lewis, whose husband had gone to Philadelphia to sign the Declaration of Independence, was seized by the British and imprisoned in New York City for three months. The experience broke her health and she died soon after her

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release. No woman who had actively aided the patriot cause could risk falling into enemy hands. Many escaped to Westchester, Dutchess, or Ulster Counties, or crossed Long Island Sound into Connecticut. Since the abandonment of their homes left them destitute, many of these women were forced to follow the American armies.

The notion that there should be an allowance to support a soldier's family when the family did not accompany the troops was unheard of. If dependents were to be fed from public stores, they had to work. "I cannot see why the soldiers Wives in Albany should be supported at public expence," wrote General Washington in 1778. "They may get most extravagant Wages for any kind of Work in the Country and to feed them when that is the case, would be robbing the public and encouraging idleness. If they would come down and attend as Nurses to the Hospitals they would find immediate employ[ment]." There were so many New York refugees, however, that Washington's army was eventually overwhelmed by women and children. In 1781 Washington ordered General Benjamin Lincoln "to take the present opportunity of depositing at West Point such of their Women as are not able to undergo the fatigue of frequent marches and also . . . Baggage which they can in any wise dispense with." Washington, however, opposed the attempts of the Secretary at War and the Superintendant of Finance to limit the number of women drawing rations to one-fifteenth the number of men. He pointed out that "the Regiments of [New] York . . . fled with their families when the enemy obtained possession of those places and have no other means of Subsistence. The Cries of these Women; the sufferings of their Children, and the complaints of the Husbands would admit of no alternative. . . . In a word, I was obliged to give Provisions to the extra Women in these Regiments, or lose by Desertion, perhaps to the Enemy, some of the oldest and best soldiers in the service."

The number of New York refugees increased as Britain's Iroquois allies began raids in the Mohawk Valley and along the upper Hudson. On June 1, 1777, General John Burgoyne invaded New York from Canada and began a drive toward Albany as part of a major campaign designed to separate New England from the other states. A second force under Lieutenant Colonel

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Barry St. Leger was to advance toward Albany through the Mohawk Valley. The Americans were rebuilding a decaying fortification at Fort Stanwix at the western end of the valley when the Iroquois made their first aggressive move, shooting and scalping two soldiers of the Fort Stanwix garrison on June 26. The garrison prepared to withstand a siege, and the sick and wounded along with most of the soldiers' families were sent back to Albany. Eight wives remained, however, to support the troops. One of them, after being seriously wounded by a shell late in the siege, gave birth to a baby girl. St. Leger's forces attacked Fort Stanwix on August 3. Tradition has it that as the firing began a strange object appeared over the walls. It was reputedly the first American flag ever to fly in the face of the enemy—an informal affair pieced together from a white shirt, an old blue jacket, and the red petticoat of a soldier's wife. Relief was on the way in the person of General Nicholas Herkimer with eight hundred militiamen and a party of Oneida warriors, including the Oneida commander's wife who was armed and ready for battle. But the Mohawk leader Molly Brant warned St. Leger, and the rescue mission failed. The siege was finally lifted by Benedict Arnold on August 24.

Meanwhile, families in the upper Hudson valley prepared to leave their homes and retreat to Albany. Catherine Schuyler, wife of General Philip Schuyler who was commanding the forces moving to block Burgoyne, went into her fields and fired the growing crops before abandoning the estate at old Saratoga. The refugees were fleeing from more than the British; they knew from experience the savagery of Indian raids. Indians did not conform to European rules of war. Indians seemed to kill indiscriminately without regard for age or sex and did not always distinguish between patriots and loyalists. The horror that the British had introduced into the war by encouraging the Iroquois to fight was symbolized by the case of Jane McCrea.

Jane McCrea lived with her brother, a colonel in the American army, near Fort Edward on the Hudson River above Albany. As frequently happened in war-torn New York, Jane McCrea did not allow her brother's politics to interfere with her love for a loyalist named David Jones, a lieutenant serving under General Frazer in Burgoyne's command. When Fort Edward

was evacuated by the Americans in July, 1777, Colonel McCrea urged his sister to go with his family to Albany. She refused and went instead to the home of her friend, "Aunt" Sarah McNeil. Apparently she planned to wait for Burgoyne's army to occupy Fort Edward, after which she could marry Jones and follow the army with the other officers' wives. Unfortunately, the Indians reached Fort Edward first. On July 25 they tomahawked and scalped eight members of the Allen family, including two children who had been dragged from under a bed. On July 27 the American garrison abandoned the lost outpost above Fort Edward with Indians in hot pursuit. Running past the McNeil house, a fleeing soldier shouted a warning; and Sarah McNeil quickly hurried Jane, her black slave woman, Eve, and Eve's baby down into the cellar. But "Aunt" McNeil was an extraordinarily heavy woman, and when she tried to follow the others she was caught in the trap hole. The Indians dragged her out. Peering into the cellar they also discovered Jane; Eve and her baby hid in the darkness. At first the Indians planned to take Jane alive. But they soon encountered another war party and, in the course of a quarrel over who should imprison the young woman, Jane McCrea was tomahawked and scalped.

The impact of the murder of Jane McCrea was immense. The story was quickly embellished. In New York City, rumors were that she had been raped by the Indians three times before she was scalped. Many New Yorkers who had been neutral or even loyal to the British now joined the patriots. Furthermore, the McCrea atrocity forced Burgoyne to reprove his Indian allies who were already growing restless, with the result that many of those who remained deserted him. Consequently, Burgoyne's position was eroding rapidly as he moved south toward Saratoga, followed by perhaps eight thousand men, two thousand women, and an undetermined number of children.

While the opposing forces moved toward confrontation at Saratoga, there was a brief flurry of excitement in Captain Abraham Hunt's company, the 1st Massachusetts Regiment, serving with General St. Clair. It was discovered that Corporal Samuel Gay, who had enlisted the previous February, was actually "a woman dressed in mens cloaths." The corporal was promptly discharged, and there is no record of what become of

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her. A few years later, however, a Massachusetts private joined the same regiment under the name of Robert Shurtleff and served with Washington at West Point, receiving a wound in a skirmish at Tappan, New York. Only after the war did Private Shurtleff reveal that "his" name was really Deborah Sampson. The ex-private demanded, and collected, a pension from Congress.

Most women with the armies, of course, were content to appear in their own clothing. On October 7, 1777, during the Battle of Bemis Heights, the voices of American women could be heard over the gunfire, wailing their fear for the safety of their husbands or vigorously cursing the enemy. When the sun set, they crawled over the battlefield, stripping the dead and wounded of the clothing that their own men would need when winter came. Ten days later, Burgoyne's entire army surrendered to the Americans at Saratoga. During the preceding battles, English and Hessian camp followers found refuge in a farmhouse cellar that was also used as a makeshift hospital, the entire operation being directed by the woman of highest social rank present, Baroness von Riedesel, wife of the Hessian general.

The baroness, or "Mrs. General" as she was often called, kept a detailed journal which gives a sharp picture of the life of a Revolutionary war camp follower. She was not, of course, an American. Hessian soldiers, like English and Irish soldiers, brought their wives with them when they came to the colonies. But the king's soldiers acquired a good number of American wives after they arrived. Many American girls favored the English cause, and the European soldiers found them very attractive. As Burgoyne's captured army marched from Saratoga to a camp near Cambridge, Massachusetts, a young German soldier recorded his impressions of the indigenous female population: "The womenfolk in this whole extensive region . . . are slender and straight, fleshy without being stout. They have pretty little feet, very solid hands and arms, a very white skin and a healthy complexion without having to paint. . . . Their teeth are very white, their lips pretty, and their eyes very laughing and animated. At the same time, they have natural good manners, a very unconstrained manner, a frank, gay face and natural boldness. . . . Dozens of these pretty girls

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stood by the road everywhere and let us pass in review, laughed at us mockingly now and then or now and then they coquettishly extended an apple with a curtsy."

The march to Cambridge was very hard on the soldiers' wives. While officers and their wives enjoyed the hospitality of the American General Schuyler and rode to Boston in relative comfort, common soldiers and their families went on foot through the Berkshire mountains. The ground was rough and the weather cold. Finally it began to snow. An English lieutenant, assigned to the baggage guard where the women and children were, left this description: "The roads across were almost impassable . . . [and when they reached the top of the pass] there came a heavy fall of snow. After this it was impossible to describe the confusion; carts breaking down, others sticking fast, some oversetting, horses tumbling with their loads of baggage, men cursing, women shrieking and children squalling. . . . In the midst of the heavy snow storm, upon a baggage cart and with nothing to shelter her from the inclemency of the weather but a bit of oil cloth, a soldier's wife was delivered of a child." By the time they reached Boston, the prisoners were a dreadful sight. "I never had the least Idea that the Creation produced such a sordid set of creatures in human Figure," wrote a Boston woman, "poor, dirty, emaciated men, great numbers of women, who seemed to be the beasts of burden, having a bushel basket on their back, by which they were bent double, the contents seemed to be Pots and Kettles, various sorts of Furniture, children peeping thro' gridirons and other utensils, some very young infants who were born on the road, the women bare feet, cloathed in dirty raggs. . . ." So distressing was their appearance that an order went out from the city authorities forbidding the camp women from showing themselves in public "for fear the pregnant women in Boston should be marked."

Burgoyne's defeat, decisive though it was, did not halt the warfare along the New York frontier. After the American victory, General Schuyler prepared a wampum belt for the Six Nations informing them of the events at Saratoga and suggesting that they come to terms with the Continental Congress. The news spread as the belt passed from tribe to tribe. But when it reached the Cayuga, a white loyalist widow, Sarah

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McGinnis, who was living with the Indians, asserted the right of an Iroquois matron to intervene in matters of diplomacy. She seized the belt and persuaded the tribe to alter the message to one more favorable to the British before passing it on.

And so the border warfare continued. In 1778, Indian raids terrorized the settlers. Indian women occasionally accompanied war parties, armed with tomahawks, and participated in the pillaging. Rumors that flew in the backcountry described a half-blooded Indian woman, Catherine or Esther Montour, who sang "a wild, weird song" as she tomahawked prisoners. White women were also active during the Indian warfare. There are dozens of recorded cases of individual tragedy or heroism. Mrs. Elizabeth Petrie Shell and her husband and sons, for example, defended their cabin near present-day Herkimer against an attack by Indians and loyalists. Mrs. Shell loaded the guns. When the enemy pushed their guns through chinks in the wall, she smashed them with an axe. The enemy finally retreated, but only after capturing her two twin boys. Another backwoods woman, Jane Campbell of Otsego County, actively supported the Committee of Safety and the local militia. She was captured by Indians in November, 1778, adopted into the Seneca nation, and finally released in 1780. Nancy Van Alstyne of Canajoharie became such an experienced Indian fighter that she was known as "Patriot Mother" of the Mohawk Valley, a peculiarly suitable tribute since she had fifteen children of her own.

Meanwhile, as some women battled in the wilderness and others trudged from camp to camp with the armies, another class of women experienced the war in an urban setting and turned to more sophisticated activity.

TREASON AND ESPIONAGE

AMONG THE AMERICANS WOUNDED at the Battle of Saratoga was Major General Benedict Arnold. Although Arnold was an inspiring military leader, he had trouble getting along with almost everyone except the soldiers under his command. Since his wound disabled him, he was assigned as military commander of Philadelphia, a post for which he was temperamentally unfit. He quickly alienated the civil authorities, his fellow officers, and most of the civilian population. In fact, Arnold found those Philadelphians who had collaborated with the enemy while the city was occupied by the British easier to deal with than the patriots. Indeed he got along with some of those collaborators very well. On April 8, 1779, the thirty-eight year old American general married nineteen-year-old Peggy Shippen, a dainty, delicate girl with large gray-blue eyes, pale blond curls, fierce loyalist principles, and a mind like a razor.

At Peggy Shippen's birth, her father wrote that the new baby, "though of the worst sex, is yet entirely welcome." When her brother proved to have no head for business, Edward Shippen gave his little girl an education in business and politics that made her capable of conducting the most complicated financial arrangements with skill and confidence. Once married to Arnold she had an opportunity to try her hand at politics. Arnold was no match for her. He had always been easily influenced by youthful advisers, and he was much in love with his vivacious little wife. Within a month of his marriage, he had decided to switch his allegiance to the British.

Contact was made with Captain (later Major) John Andre, General Henry Clinton's aide in New York City, whom Peggy had met during the British occupation. Eventually it was decided that the most useful thing Arnold could do for the British was to surrender the fortification at West Point to them.

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To do that he needed first to be appointed to that post. Peggy helped by enlisting the help of the New York patriot leader, Robert R. Livingston. On August 3, 1780, Arnold got the assignment. The plot misfired, but barely. Andre was captured on his way to meet Arnold, and Arnold himself fled to the British lines in New York City on September 26. When a compromising letter from Andre to Peggy Arnold was discovered in Philadelphia by the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania, the newspapers argued that its existence disproved "the fallacious and dangerous sentiments so frequently avowed in this city that female opinions are of no consequence in public matters. . . . Behold the consequence!"

Fortunately for the Americans, West Point was not lost. But patriot intelligence operations in New York City were crippled since Arnold knew about some people who had spied on him.

New York City has been called "the spy center of the Revolution." From 1776 until 1783, it was occupied by the British and filled with royal officers, soldiers, and loyalists who knew things General Washington wanted to know. Hundreds of patriots fled the town when the British arrived, and thousands of British and Hessian troops, loyalists, and runaway slaves arrived to take their places, causing acute shortages of everything from housing to food and firewood. Many New Yorkers who had been neutral or loyal when the British arrived became patriots after suffering the hardships of British occupation. In August, 1778, a niece of New Jersey Governor William Livingston received permission to visit her sister (whose husband had been neutral) in New York City. She now found that her sister's "political principles are perfectly rebellious," and she felt confident that the whole family would soon be patriots. "The sentiments of a great number have undergone a thorough change since they have been with the British army," she reported, "as they have many opportunities of seeing flagrant acts of injustice and cruelty of which they could not have believed their friends capable." Rape was one of the grievances that made patriots out of neutrals, for American women took it more seriously than the British officers. "The fair nymphs of this isle [Staten Island] are in wonderful tribulation," an English officer wrote cheerfully to a friend in London, "as the fresh meat our men have got here has made them riotous as

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satyrs. A girl cannot step into the bushes to pluck a rose without running the most imminent risk of being ravished, and they are so little accustomed to these rigourous methods that they don't bear them with the proper resignation, and of consequence we have the most entertaining courts-martial every day."

There was soon enough concealed hatred of the British among the inhabitants of the occupied town to produce many who would gladly pass on secrets overheard in taverns, coffee houses, or brothels. Others could code the messages, copy them in invisible ink, and then smuggle them from Long Island into Connecticut between the bound covers of a book or hidden in the sole of a boot. The agents of the American intelligence organization that performed this task used code names and hid their identities so well that the names of some are still unknown. But the outline of the operation is clear, and we know that a number of women were involved.

The intelligence system known as the Culper Ring was established in 1778 on Washington's orders by Major Benjamin Tallmadge. He was related to Anna Strong, wife of Judge Selah Strong of Strong's Neck, Long Island, whose home was convenient to several inlets that could receive small boats moving unobtrusively across the Long Island sound to patriot-held Connecticut. An offshore boat could be signalled if Mrs. Strong hung a black petticoat and a predetermined number of white handkerchiefs on her clothesline. One of Anna Strong's neighbors, Abraham Woodhull, was then recruited as "Samuel Culper" and began intelligence missions into New York under cover of visits to his sister, Mary Underhill, who ran a boarding house on Queen Street. "Samuel Culper" recruited "Samuel Culper, Junior"—Robert Townsend of Oyster Bay who frequently made business trips into the City—and Townsend brought in several of his relatives: Sarah Townsend in Oyster Bay, and Phoebe Townsend Lawrence, who lived with her husband in Bayside. The conspirators badly needed a permanent agent in New York City. On August 15, 1779, "Samuel Culper" wrote in code: "Every 356 [letter] is opened at the entrance of 727 [New York], and everyone is searched. They have some 345 [knowledge] of the route our 356 [letter] takes. . . . I intend to visit 727 [New York] before long and think by the assistance

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of a 355 of my acquaintance, shall be able to outwit them all." A "355" was a "lady." We do not know her name, but she was one of the most valuable agents in the American service.

Agent 355 may have passed on intelligence on the Arnold-Andre plot; at any rate Arnold eventually found out about her. When Townsend learned that Arnold had come over to the British, he warned his Manhattan agents to leave the city or go underground. When almost a month had passed since Arnold's defection and no arrests were made, Townsend wrote: "I am happy to think that Arnold does not know my name . . . [N]o person has been taken up on his information." But the very next day several arrests were made, and 355 was confined on the prison ship *Jersey*. Five months later she was dead after bearing a child named Robert Townsend, Junior. But if her "control" was the father, they never married.

While she was in prison, 355 was visited several times by a Quaker woman from Brooklyn, Deborah Franklin. It was probably Mrs. Franklin who carried the infant ashore. She was one of a number of charitable women who risked the displeasure of the authorities by bringing food to the American prisoners of war and, when possible, helping them to escape. In 1781 one of these women, Elizabeth Bergen, was awarded an annual pension by Congress. After the war Sarah Whaley, Mary Whetten, and Mrs. Adam Todd were formally commended by General Washington.

New York City women were drawn into active service in the patriot cause because the deplorable situation of the prisoners could not be ignored. The American prisoners were treated abominably and were in urgent need of help. Their condition was made particularly wretched because the provost marshal, William Cunningham, was a half-demented sadist. At his death (he was hanged for forgery in 1791) he confessed to the murder of more than 2000 of the prisoners who had been in his charge during the war. Some were starved, some were hanged, and some were deliberately poisoned with arsenic. Hundreds more died of disease in the overcrowded, filthy cells, where they had inadequate clothing, little fuel, and only polluted water to drink. When Cunningham was drunk, he would roar through the prison corridors, cursing and kicking over the pots of soup the women had brought.

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Cunningham was drunk on November 25, 1783, the day the British were to evacuate New York City following the signing of the treaty of peace. The citizens of New York had prepared for General Washington's triumphal entry into the city by hanging out flags. After drinking heavily all night, Cunningham stumbled through the streets shouting "some scores of double-headed damns" and tearing down every red, white, and blue banner he saw. When he came to Day's Tavern on Murray Street and grabbed for the flag, his anti-American activities were brought to a halt. Mrs. Day attacked him in the street and beat him with her fists until "the powder flew from his wig." The war was over; there would be no more British tyranny in New York.

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AFTERMATH

When the British left New York City they took approximately four thousand blacks with them. Probably just under a third were women and just over a quarter children. Some of blacks had deliberately run away to the British lines in hope of freedom; others were "property" confiscated from rebels by the British armies. Most of those who sailed away with the British ended up in Canada or in the British Caribbean islands, and most of them remained enslaved. Many blacks who sailed away with the British in anticipation of freedom were sharply disillusioned.

Those blacks who through choice or fate remained in New York at the end of the war did somewhat better. On the march from Saratoga to Cambridge, the Hessian soldiers were impressed by seeing "many free Negro families who dwell in good homes, have means, and live quite in the manner of the other inhabitants." The ideology of the Revolution and the disorder created by the war crippled—and within a few decades destroyed—the institution of slavery in New York. Many slaves ran away during the war; only a few went over to the British. Black men who served with the American forces earned both freedom and land. Slaves belonging to loyalists were freed outright, and many patriot slave owners freed their slaves on principle. In 1799 New York legislated an end to slavery.

Progress for black women in New York was painfully slow, for they suffered the double handicaps of sex and race. But as the eighteenth century ended, individual black women begin to leave sharper images in the historical record. Several free black women appear on the tax lists of 1789 as property owners. In 1793 Catherine Ferguson, who had purchased her own freedom, took twenty white children and twenty-eight black

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children from an almshouse and established "Katy Ferguson's School for the Poor" in New York City. And about 1797 a slave girl was born in Ulster County, New York, who would eventually gain fame as the feminist lecturer, Sojourner Truth.

While black women made some gains from the war, Indian women lost. When the British left New York, thousands of Iroquois joined the exodus. The Mohawks emigrated to Canada in a body; other tribes moved farther into the western portion of Iroquois land. The power of the Iroquois was destroyed forever in the United States. Iroquois matrons retreated with their tribes and never again influenced the mainstream of American history. Promptly after the war the Americans began to encroach on the Indian territory, and encroachments began first on the lands belonging to tribes that had sided with the patriots. As early as 1786 a Rhode Island religious leader named Jemima Wilkinson sent an exploring party into Indian land and soon afterward established a "New Jerusalem" near what is now Schenectady, New York. By 1790, the colony had a population of two hundred and sixty.

A third group of women leaving New York with the British was composed of loyalists and British and Hessian camp-followers. Some of the latter returned to homes they had left years earlier, but others were American women who were following their soldier husbands to strange lands. Some military wives and mistresses, however, who seem to have been regarded as casually as lost baggage, became displaced persons. It was not always convenient to transport the families of soldiers with the troops. In 1779 when a British army was moved from New York City by ship, families that were left behind were sent to Cork, Ireland, although many of them were not Irish. In 1781, wives and families were forced to remain in New York City when the British troops sailed off to join Cornwallis in the South. Many of the husbands were killed or deserted in the course of the final campaign of the war, and their wives consequently were left to survive as best they could in the expensive, overcrowded city.

When slaves, Iroquois, loyalists, and army wives had gone, the women remaining in New York after the war had to consider how their lives might change now that they were citizens of the United States of America. There was some reason to

think that it ought to improve. Abigail Adams had pointed out in 1776 that the principles of the Revolution were incompatible with the restrictions the English common law placed on wives, forcing John Adams to admit that the principles of representative government would logically require the enfranchisement of females. There were even a few interesting feminist stirrings in New York in the years immediately following the Revolution. Educational reformers, arguing for more advanced education for women, were active in New York. Charles Brockden Brown, whose book *Alcuin: A Dialogue* was a plea for the equality of the sexes, did his most important work while a resident of New York. The ideas of the radical English feminist Mary Wollstonecraft, whose *Vindication of the Rights of Women* was published in 1790, had a degree of exposure and discussion in New York magazines.

But these trends did not prevail in the post-Revolutionary years. The egalitarian implications of the Revolution were overwhelmed by the confining ideas of ladylike behavior adopted from England. Increasing wealth and the passage of time enabled the simple pioneer society of America to become more like its English antecedent. English attitudes toward women – what would later be called the "Victorian" conception of women as helpless, useless, dependent appendages of male society – were eagerly assimilated by status-conscious Americans. As the English influence continued to erode Dutch customs in New York, Dutch women lost their special legal status and grew dependent and "ladylike" too. Women who wanted to be ladies, Americans learned, did not want economic or political rights. As the *New York Weekly Museum* put it:

> Small is the province of a wife
> And narrow is her sphere of life;
> Within that sphere to move aright
> Should be her principal delight, . . .
> To make her husband bless the day
> He gave his liberty away.

Throughout America, the status of women deteriorated. While New Jersey admitted unmarried women of property to the franchise for a few years after the Revolution, New York became the first state explicitly to disfranchise all females.

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Logic aside, John Adams stated that it was "impossible" in practice to extend the principle of political consent to women. Except for the eccentric and shortlived experiment in New Jersey, all states discouraged women from voting even when they did not think it necessary legally to forbid it. The only comment on New Jersey's experiment found in the New York press is a terse paragraph in the New York *Spectator* for October 21, 1797. Noting that women had voted in "the late Election at Elizabeth Town," the printer observed: "Though it is a general opinion that females ought not to intermeddle in political affairs, yet the emperor of Java never employs any but women in his embassies." If the *Spectator*'s comment could be construed as a lukewarm espousal of women's political rights, the notion had no impact on male readers. For all intents and purposes, the Revolutionary generation had shelved the issue of women's rights.

Fortunately the story does not end there. The principles of the American Revolution soon infected the French where the strain of egalitarian idealism in American Revolutionary principles grew more virulent as the French Revolution progressed. Even the modern abolition movement and the women's rights movement were born in the Revolutionary ferment of the late eighteenth century, although both grew slowly. In July of 1848, the implications of the Revolutionary ideals for American women were revived in New York State with a vengeance. A convention at Seneca Falls adopted "the most famous document in the history of feminism." It would have sounded oddly familiar to the New York women of the Revolutionary generation: "When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume among the people of the earth a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but one to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they declare the causes that impel them to such a course. . . ."

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Mary S. Benson, *Women in Eighteenth Century America* (New York, 1966)

Kennikat reprint of 1935 study. Scholarly examination of eighteenth century views of women's role and status.

Walter Hart Blumenthal, *Women Camp Followers of the American Revolution* (Philadelphia, 1952)

Only 500 copies of this book were printed. It is the only published study of this important aspect of women's involvement in the Revolution.

Marvin L. Brown, Jr., ed., *Baroness Von Riedesel and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1965)

New translation of the baroness's journal and correspondence 1776–1783. Charming eyewitness account of the war from the perspective of an upper class Hessian camp-follower.

Linda Grant De Pauw, *Forgotten Spirit of '76: Women in the Revolutionary Era* (New York, July, 1974)

Brief historical summaries and selected bibliography on topics relating to women in America 1760–1800 to be published in *Ms* magazine, July, 1974. Will be available as a booklet from *Ms*.

Alice Morse Earle, *Colonial Days in Old New York* (New York, 1896)

Old fashioned social history without bibliography or footnotes. Deals primarily with Dutch New York. Interesting reading.

Mary G. Humphreys, *Catherine Schuyler* (New York, 1897)

One of six in Scribner's "Women of Colonial and Revolutionary Times" series. Tolerably well written, but the central character is pale.

Alice P. Kenney, *The Gansevoorts of Albany* (Syracuse, 1969)

Examines Dutch patricians in the upper Hudson valley by focusing on a single family. Scholarly and good reading.

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Eugenie Andruss Leonard, *The Dear-Bought Heritage* (Philadelphia, 1965)

The best general survey of women in colonial America although based almost entirely on secondary sources. Contains an excellent bibliography.

Eugenie Andruss Leonard, Sophie Hutchinson, and Miriam Young Holden, *The American Woman in Colonial and Revolutionary Times, 1565–1800* (Philadelphia, 1962)

A bibliographic reference work.

James E. Seaver, *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison* (New York, 1961)

Corinth paperback reprint of 1824 original. Biography of a white woman adopted by the Senecas.

May King Van Rensselaer, *The Goede Vrouw of Mana-ha-ta* (New York, 1972)

Arno reprint of 1898 original. Old fashioned social history dealing with Dutch New York 1609–1760. Intelligent and well written but without scholarly apparatus.

James Grant Wilson, ed., Anne Grant, *Memoirs of an American Lady* (New York, 1909)

First published in 1808. A delightful description of Albany life before the Revolution as seen by a child.

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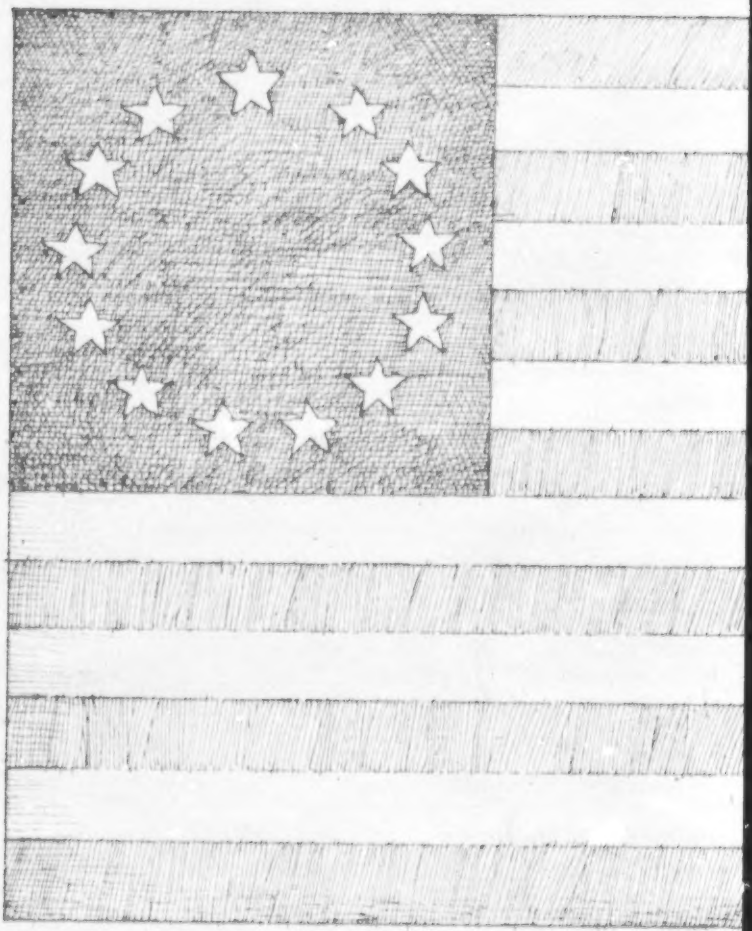

NEW YORK STATE
AMERICAN REVOLUTION BICENTENNIAL COMMISSION

Printed by The University of The State of New York Press

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